

Legislative Council,*Thursday, 6th December, 1906.*

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THE PRESIDENT took the Chair at 4.30 o'clock p.m.

PRAYERS.**STANDING ORDERS AMENDMENT.****JOINT COMMITTEE TO CONFER.**

THE COLONIAL SECRETARY (Hon. J. D. Connolly) moved -

1. That leave be granted to the Standing Orders Committee of this House to sit during the recess, with power to confer with the Standing Orders Committee of the Legislative Assembly, with a view to their preparing a report on the Standing Orders for submission to this House. 2. That the Standing Orders Committee of this House have power to add to their number, not exceeding two. 3. That a Message be sent to the Legislative Assembly requesting them to make similar provision for adding to the number of members of the Standing Orders Committee of that House.

The motion needed little explanation. It had been remarked from time to time that our Standing Orders were not as good as they might be; and it was with a view to improving them that he moved this motion.

HON. W. KINGSMILL (Metropolitan-Suburban) was glad the motion was moved. No doubt it would be carried, but there were one or two matters to which he wished to refer in connection with the Standing Orders. Probably there had not been another session of the House when so many little points of order, and some of them large points of order, had arisen. The raising of these points of order undoubtedly betrayed several extremely weak points in our Standing Orders. The House should make sure of the fact that its rights would be jealously guarded by the Standing Orders Committee, because some slight alteration might make a considerable difference to the rights of this Chamber. One of the particular objects

the Standing Orders Committee should consider was the fixing of the very vexed point, on which there was a discussion recently, in regard to the occasions on which conferences could take place between the two Houses. Views backed up by very authoritative statements of widely divergent character had been given; and as the conduct of conferences was not clearly laid down, some clear understanding should be arrived at as to the stage at which conferences could be held, because the matter was wrapped up in a good deal of obscurity at present. It was most peculiar that the parts of the Standing Orders referring to messages between the two Houses appeared to be unnecessarily complicated. Apparently a great deal of trouble had been taken to make the Standing Orders dealing with public Bills and relating to messages between the two Houses very nearly incomprehensible. No doubt these particular Standing Orders should be put into language which could be more easily comprehended by the average member of Parliament. We had instances this session of the trouble that could arise through lack of accuracy, and it was again a most peculiar thing that in our Standing Orders there was no form of report or form of message. This should be rectified. At present if a message had to be sent or a report made, the form of the report of message was left practically to the officers or the House to decide. That was not right, and the Standing Orders Committee with their coadjutors, when they embarked on their duties, should not forget this also. He hoped the efforts of the gentlemen appointed would result in a more satisfactory form of Standing Orders than we had at present.

HON. J. W. HACKETT (South-West): The motion should be accepted. Having, as one of the original committee condemned so strongly by Mr. Kingsmill, assisted in drawing up these Standing Orders, he could say that the South Australian Standing Orders were taken almost throughout as an example, because of the name and fame of Mr. Blackmore and his coadjutors. The committee took it to a large extent that the South Australian Standing Orders were infallible; but in going through them before recommending their adop-

tion by Western Australian Houses of Parliament, the committee made a great number of corrections and amendments, which he ventured to say were improvements; while immediately after completing the task, and after the two Houses had accepted the report of the committee as a basis for the Standing Orders for the future, one became aware of a great many more mistakes and omissions, to some of which Mr. Kingsmill had drawn attention; also since that time a provision had been added to our legislation which necessitated a whole group of Standing Orders relating to the communications between the two Houses when Section 46 of the Constitution Act was brought into play. Unfortunately in that case we had no assistance whatever from South Australia, nor from the Federal Parliament, which had a similar provision, so that in the circumstances it was quite clear that we must take action ourselves. Unless the Joint Committee of the two Houses lost their heads, they would present a body of rules which would be a great improvement on those now in force.

HON. G. RANDELL (Metropolitan): The Standing Orders Committee should be careful in making amendments to Standing Orders. His opinion was that the Standing Orders relating to messages between the two Houses were purposely left as they were. When forming a Constitution for the Federal Parliament, the same question cropped up; and we might be landed in some difficulty if a distinct order or rule were laid down. His impression was that these rules were purposely left vague, because it was found how difficult it was to have Standing Orders which protected the rights and privileges of both Houses of Parliament. The present Standing Orders presented no difficulty in respect of communications between the two Houses; but he knew that was not the feeling in the minds of other members. However, we should be careful. Of course the House would review the recommendations of the Standing Orders Committee, when the report was presented to Parliament, and then there would be an opportunity for the House to protect itself, if we thought that in any way the Standing Orders Committee had given away any of our privileges, or ventured in any direction likely

to affect the privileges of the House. He only mentioned this by way of caution. Perhaps the members comprising the committee would need no caution to be given, but at the same time what he said should be taken in the spirit in which it was intended, and no offence should be laid at his door in the matter. He only hoped they would be able to arrive at some conclusion that would remove the difficulty which both the President of the Legislative Council and the Speaker of the Legislative Assembly had been placed in during this session, and that an alteration would be made so that there would be no possibility of a wrong ruling. These two or three Standing Orders had stood us in good stead for a considerable time, and he was not anxious for a change, but was willing to accept anything that might be evolved from a consultation of committees of the two Houses.

Question put and passed.

LAND TAX ASSESSMENT, TO REIN- STATE BILL.

THE COLONIAL SECRETARY (Hon. J. D. Connolly) moved—

That the resolution of this House passed on the 28th November, "That the Committee on the Land Tax Assessment Bill have leave to sit again this day six months," be rescinded, and that the House do resolve itself into Committee forthwith to farther consider the Message No. 31 from the Legislative Assembly.

He said: In moving this motion I am alive to the fact that it is by far the most important motion that has been moved in this House during the present session, or during any session of this House. It will be within the memory of members that the Government in another place had introduced a Land Tax Assessment Bill. In due course that came to this Chamber. It was lengthily and ably debated on the second reading; and I think it had a fuller and I may say better debate than is the fortune of most Bills which come to this Chamber. After it had been fairly and fully debated, a division was first taken on a motion by Mr. Moss that the Bill be read that day six months. As members are aware, that motion was defeated by I think one vote. The second reading was subsequently carried by a similar majority.

Then in the natural order of things we considered that Bill in Committee. This House thought fit to make several amendments in the Bill. After agreeing to the principle, the majority thought their next duty was to make the Bill as workable and as good a Bill to their minds as possible. That was accordingly done, and the Bill was sent along in due course to another place. Another place disagreed to certain amendments that the Legislative Council had made, and agreed to others. Members will recollect that it then came up for consideration, and the House then thought fit to adopt a very extraordinary course. A motion that progress be reported was negatived by one vote, and the Bill was lost for the time. Message No. 31 referred to in the motion I now move was the message sending the Bill back from the Legislative Assembly. I think members will agree that it was a very unusual course to throw out a Bill on a motion of that kind. The Standing Orders happily provide that a motion can be reinstated by a majority of the whole House. The Bill was not killed in the ordinary sense. A Bill can only be defeated on negativing the second reading or passing an amendment for six months. This was simply a motion that progress be reported. It is quite within our rights to rescind any resolution of the House, provided notice is given and that a majority of the whole House agrees to it.

HON. W. KINGSMILL: They can reinstate any vote, I think; resolution or other vote.

THE COLONIAL SECRETARY: That makes it more certain we are on the right course, that we are quite within our rights.

HON. W. KINGSMILL: Not on the right course.

THE COLONIAL SECRETARY: That is a matter of opinion. You may not think so. What I wish to point out is this. I want hon. members to clearly understand that in speaking to-night I do not wish to offer any threat or anything of that kind. I simply wish to put the position fairly before you, and for you to consider which is the best course to adopt. In the first place I maintain that it has been the practice for centuries that the Upper House shall not interfere in a taxation measure. It has been laid

down by custom that the House of Assembly or the House of Commons in England, as the House elected by universal suffrage, shall be the House that is to say what taxation is best and what is not. I do not say we have no right to make suggestions; but I do assert that it has been laid down by custom for centuries that this House shall not interfere with the financial proposals of any Government. I wish members to consider the position the House is in, and I speak now more as a member, in fact entirely as a member, of the Upper House, and one who is a firm believer in the Upper House, and I say that whether this Government may be in office or out of office, or any other Government, or whether we have a bad Government in for a few years, it is a very small matter to my mind compared with anything you may do to permanently injure and seriously endanger the Upper House. I maintain that members by their action placed the House in a position that it would be impossible for me as a believer in the Upper House, or any other member, to defend. You pass the second reading of the Bill by a majority of the whole House, and you amend it in Committee, and then by, if I may call it so, a trick, or at any rate by an unusual course, by a vote of 11 members you put it out. The Premier has made a statement in another place as to what the decision of the Government is. He stated that the Council by a minority in a small House had seen fit to throw out a taxation measure, which interfered altogether with the financial proposals of the Government. He then declared, and it is still the intention of the Government, that a special session would be called in February for the purpose of getting taxation measures dealt with. The Assembly will be again asked to assent to the measure, which will come up in the usual course. In the first place the House adopted a very unusual course, and, as I have stated, it placed members in a position I do not think their best friends could defend them in. There were only two-thirds of the House present on that occasion, and it is now open for a majority of the House to say "We do not approve of the minority acting in that way. We are willing by a vote to reinstate that measure, to give it calm and deliberate consideration." The

vote was taken perhaps somewhat hurriedly, and its being an unusual course I think some members did not quite realise the very serious step they were taking in voting with the Ayes on that occasion. If members—and I am sure it is the case with many of the 11 who voted on that particular day—have the welfare of this House at heart they will be quite justified, and in fact they will be doing only what is their duty, in voting for this motion to-day and placing the matter again on the Notice Paper. It will then receive a fair and calm consideration at the hands of this House, and will not be thrown out without any discussion or practically without any discussion as it was before. There are two questions to consider. First, are the majority of the House going to say by their vote that they approve of the action which took place in the Council on the 28th November? If not, of course they will vote for the motion, and the measure will be reinstated and will receive fair consideration. The next point to consider is, is it better to reinstate and consider it again, or to have a special session in February? It comes back to the same thing, for if you meet in February you have to consider the Bill again. Is it better to say, "Yes, we will vote to reinstate this measure and consider it now," or to put yourselves and the country to the trouble and expense of having a special session? During the whole of that time—and I am speaking again purely as a member of the Upper House—your action on the 28th in shelving the Bill in this House in an unusual way will be discussed. I have taken the trouble to talk with business people outside, with people who, like myself, are firm believers in this House, and I cannot find one who can justify the House in the action taken. All I have met, business people, large property-owners, deeply regret the action taken, for they hold that the Upper House is essentially a House needed and a House they will always be pleased to retain, but they feel that the action of the House on the 28th November has, so to speak, taken the wind out of their sails, and this is the only occasion when they have not been able to support the action of the House. On these grounds I would ask the House to think calmly over it. I do not want you for a moment to look

upon it as a favour to the Government or as a favour to myself. It is not that at all. I want you to look at the action of the House on the 28th and think whether you can justify it, and whether it would not be well to rescind that resolution and allow your friends to use the argument which has been used, that this is a non-party House, that it gives every measure that comes before it calm and careful consideration, that it does not adopt any party method by taking advantage of a thin House or anything of that kind to throw a Bill out. I would ask you for these reasons to give the matter very careful consideration and vote for the motion before the House.

HON. R. F. SHOLL (North): I do not intend to support the motion. I have always been against the Taxation Assessment Bill, because it is a Bill for class taxation, and it is the duty of this House to see that no legislation of this character passes it. Much has been said about a snap vote having been taken in a thin House; but I assert that if a vote of the whole House had been taken, all members being present, the result would have been about the same.

THE COLONIAL SECRETARY: Rescind the resolution; then we can try it.

HON. R. F. SHOLL: Members know who are for and who are against this measure, and if they care to take the trouble they can easily see that the result of another vote would be the same as that which threw out the Bill. I entirely disagree with the Colonial Secretary when he says this House has no right to interfere with a taxation measure. We have no right to impose taxation; but this House has a perfect right to restrict taxation—that is what this House is for.

HON. J. W. HACKETT: What is the difference?

HON. R. F. SHOLL: The difference is great. We may not impose taxation, but we can restrict it. This policy of a land tax as brought down by the Government was ill considered, and it is a pity the Government have introduced such legislation at all. Some other means might have been found to obtain necessary revenue than by bringing in a class taxation Bill of this kind; and as I have been consistent right through in regard to the Bill, I intend to oppose this motion by

the Colonial Secretary. As regards any reports or newspaper articles, these do not affect me in the slightest degree; because, after all, it is only one man who holds the pen, and he generally writes his articles as the matter affects him personally or affects those connected with him. Therefore I prefer to hold my own opinion, rather than to be guided by the advice of any editor of a newspaper, or by any individual member of the community.

THE PRESIDENT: Before the debate proceeds farther, I may say it is laid down in *May* that a debate on such a subject as this must be limited to the precise object of the motion.

HON. W. KINGSMILL (Metropolitan-Suburban): It is not my intention, and I do not suppose hon. members will think it is, to support the Bill at this stage any more than at any other stages. For my part I am taking very much the same ground as Mr. Sholl in opposing this motion, for this reason, that if members go through the names-list of the House they will find that the most the Government can hope for is a tie on the third reading; and a tie, as everybody knows, is a negative against the Bill. That being so, I do not think the Colonial Secretary is justified in saying that the vote taken on the occasion named was a snap vote of the House. That, at all events, is my opinion. I am also taking the same attitude as Mr. Sholl in connection with the remarks that have appeared in certain portions of the Press during the time this subject has occupied public attention—remarks which appear to attribute to myself and to another hon. member a deal of animus against the Government, and great pertinacity in opposing, not the Bill, but the Government.

HON. J. W. HACKETT: I think the hon. member should not make a charge of such a sweeping character without mentioning the name of the paper against which it is made.

HON. W. KINGSMILL: Let me assure the hon. member it is not the section of the Press he has any connection with. The remarks I am alluding to appeared in a morning paper to-day. In making this explanation I trust that a

little latitude will be allowed me, as that which appeared in a certain paper to-day was a distinct reflection upon me, and one I feel very keenly. With regard to my attitude towards the Bill, I think I have shown unmistakably that I was opposed to it from the first, for reasons which I maintain to be good, and which I stated when speaking on the second reading. I most certainly do not think the Bill a good one; and farther I do not think that the resolution which disposed of the Bill should be rescinded. I do not think the Bill a good one for the reason, as I said on the second reading, that it is ill considered, it is class taxation, and it is absolutely inadequate for the purpose for which it was presented. This State is apparently going to leeward at the rate of £40,000 a month, and this measure to raise £50,000 is the only proposal to meet the increasing deficit—it is most absurd. For this reason, at this stage as at every other stage at which I have an opportunity of voting, I intend to oppose the motion as I oppose the Bill.

HON. F. CONNOR (North): I do not wish to give a silent vote on this question, and I desire now only to reiterate what I have said in regard to this proposed legislation from the first. Although I am in favour of a tax on unimproved land, I am against any measure which will tend towards the stoppage of settlement on the land by the people we want to attract to it. I have no hesitation in saying that although the exemptions proposed by the Government do for the time being take away the sting from people who want to settle on and develop the land, still the worst advertisement this country can get, the worst advertisement that can be put before the world at the present time, would be the fact that it is necessary to put a tax on unimproved land values in this State. Unimproved land I would tax, but I am opposed to the principle of taxing unimproved land values; and I am prepared to accept the consequences of any opinion my constituents may hold in regard to my actions in this matter. This Bill, if passed, would absolutely have the effect of stopping people from settling on the land. That is the stand I have taken from the initiation of this measure, that is the stand I intend to

take for the future, and I do not care what the Press of the country may say of my action. [Interjection by DR. HACKETT.] I know that the hon. member interjecting is not particularly in love with the land tax, because he is a large speculator in land. I know there might have been, though I will not say there have been, propositions placed before him which he might have felt inclined to go into, were it not for the taxation suggested in this Bill. Before I vote against this motion, I wish to explain that although I am in favour of a tax on unimproved land, I am not in favour of a tax that will have the effect of stopping settlement on the land.

HON. G. RANDELL (Metropolitan): It is my intention to vote for the motion; but I think it is due from me to say a few words on the subject. I totally disagree with most of the arguments the Minister used as to why we should support and adopt this motion. Especially am I opposed to the argument as to the powers of this House to deal with taxation proposals. That argument, if carried to its ultimate or logical conclusion, would prevent this House from dealing with or even amending any taxation Bill sent from another place. Suppose a Government is in power that is utterly unscrupulous, and it brings down measures which do not commend themselves to the country or to the Legislative Council; are we to sit dumb in our places without venturing any expression of opinion? Are we to take no steps to reverse what we think would be to the disadvantage and the injury of the best interests of the country? I am sure members will say at once, and the Colonial Secretary himself will join with me in saying "No." I take exception also to the arguments used by the *West Australian*, which amount to the same thing, that we should curtail the privileges of this House. We are here for the purpose of considering all legislation that comes down to us, whether it is a taxation Bill or anything else; and it is the duty, as it is the right, of members of this House to consider anything that is in the interests of the country, and if it be a taxation measure that should be opposed, we should reject it, and then the country can say what it likes in regard to the

action taken. I am of opinion that we have a large body of public opinion with us in this matter. I know there are many people, I might safely say thousands, who sincerely hope that this Bill will not come into operation. Some of them may object to the method adopted in defeating the measure.

THE COLONIAL SECRETARY: That is just the matter which I was speaking of.

HON. G. RANDELL: I am not justifying the action taken on that occasion. As members know, I was opposed to that particular action, and the member proposing the motion was willing to withdraw it, but on account of the Standing Orders he was not allowed to do so when objection was raised. So in that respect it was not a snap vote. It was perhaps done in the heat of the moment, and some of us at any rate may not have quite considered the question of how to deal with the Bill. I felt myself under an obligation to vote with those who thought with me in regard to the principle of the Bill, which had already been referred to as being bad. I hold strongly the opinion expressed by Mr. Connor on the question of the unimproved land values feature of the Bill, that it ought to be and I hoped would be amended at an early date if the Bill were carried into law. We had that principle embodied in the new Municipal Corporations Bill before amendment by this House. This House has always set its face against that unrighteous method of taxation. When we say to ourselves that this House has no power to interfere with a taxation Bill, we are on the wrong side of the hedge. It is demanded of us by the position we occupy that we should not be afraid of the consequences of embodying our views and carrying out our resolutions to the fullest extent. I do not think I need go over the ground again, but I object as strongly as possible to the argument used in the public Press, and which I understood the Colonial Secretary to use this afternoon, that we have no right to interfere with a taxation measure sent up from another place. The Minister stated quite correctly that we cannot initiate taxation; but we can at any time review taxation.

HON. M. L. MOSS: Otherwise Section 46 of the Constitution Act Amendment Act is useless.

HON. G. RANDELL: That is so. If not, the great reason for the establishment and the existence of a Legislative Council disappears altogether. I certainly object most strongly to the arguments used. I do not believe they affect hon. members; at all events, they have not affected Mr. Sholl and others; and I do not believe any newspaper influence will affect their opinion of the right course to adopt with regard to this legislation. After carefully considering the matter, without any desire to harass the Government, I have concluded it is my duty to support them in reinstating this measure for farther consideration by the House. I trust those who agree with my views on the Bill will realise I am taking this course from a right and proper motive.

On motion by the HON. R. LAURIE, debate adjourned.

BILL—LAND ACT AMENDMENT.

Read a third time, and *passed*.

BILL—LOAN, £2,467,000.

SECOND READING.

Resumed from the previous day.

HON. T. F. O. BRIMAGE (North-East): I do not think I should have troubled to address the House but that Mr. Moss seems to take the greatest delight in the world in opposing any progressive works on the goldfields; and the Coolgardie-Norseman Railway seems to be his pet aversion. I regret that a gentleman such as Mr. Moss should look on these public works from anything like a provincial point of view. I do not know goldfields public work of any magnitude passed by this Chamber since I have been a member that has not received most strenuous opposition from Mr. Moss; and that I regret. I do not think the goldfields members as a body ever attempted to oppose public works in any part of the country which they do not represent; and as to the Fremantle dock, I intend to give it my support. But I think it somewhat hard that the hon. member should show such opposition to the Coolgardie-Norseman Railway. He turned aside in his speech to mention the Goldfields Water Scheme, and the annual loss of £80,000 which it

involves. That matter he brings before the Chamber at every opportunity. He mentioned it the last time he spoke, and I wish to protest against his continually harping on it. I do not think the loss should be debited in any way whatever to the scheme. When the scheme was initiated, water on the goldfields was costing the railways £170,000 per annum; but the scheme has resulted in reducing that item to £20,000 per annum, showing that the railways have made a saving of £150,000. Surely it is fair to debit the railways with more than they are now paying for the water. So gigantic a work as the water scheme justifies at least the silent respect of the hon. member instead of the continual abuse which issues from his lips.

HON. M. L. MOSS: This is a terrible castigation.

HON. T. F. O. BRIMAGE: Like other members I think we should have the fullest information as to these big loans, and I trust the Colonial Secretary will when he replies give the information requested, so that we may form a better judgment of many of the items proposed. One other matter I should like to mention: the enormous works carried out without the authority of Parliament by the Commissioner of Railways. I notice he has spent something like £600,000 without reference to the House. I do not think that is right. Works of that magnitude should be passed by the House, and I protest against one gentleman spending so much public money without the authority of Parliament. I have pleasure in supporting the second reading.

HON. J. W. LANGSFORD (Metropolitan-Suburban): Several members have referred to works either mentioned or not mentioned for their various provinces. One looks in vain for any mention of public works in the Metropolitan-Suburban Province. We have no light-houses, no harbour works, no spur railways; and even Mr. Connor, with £500 for mineral development in the Kimberley district, is much better dealt with than are metropolitan-suburban members. I do not know whether this is because of the modesty of the representatives of that province; possibly it

is. I have risen only to clear up the question of the sinking fund on our loans; and I should like the Colonial Secretary to tell us what benefit, beyond the putting aside of a sinking fund, this State derives from the existence of such a fund: whether we are able to float our loans more cheaply than the Eastern States, which have no sinking funds, can float theirs. I do not wish to imperil or interfere with the sinking fund which all our loans carry; but I am given to understand that our railways are kept up to a working standard, and in a state of completeness, out of revenue. If that be so, we are setting aside one per cent. for sinking fund; so in a few years we shall hand on to posterity railways free of charge, at a cost of nothing.

HON. G. RANDELL: No fear.

HON. J. W. LANGSFORD: Whether that is the intention, or whether my view is correct, I do not know.

HON. M. L. MOSS: You are quite right. The sinking fund will automatically extinguish the debt.

HON. J. W. LANGSFORD: Then we shall hand over to posterity, in the course of 20 or 30 years, a complete railway system for which they will pay nothing. I think the sinking fund is now costing the State about a quarter of a million a year out of our general revenue, and the contribution is increasing year by year. As every loan is raised the sinking fund naturally, by virtue of the provision of the Loan Bill, increases also after four years from the first issue of the stock. I do not clearly see why we should hand on to those who will come after us a complete railway system, railways being our main public works. In our Goldfields Water Scheme we have what we term a wasting asset in the pipes; but our rolling-stock and our permanent way are kept up to their original standard pretty largely out of general revenue. [MEMBER: Out of loan.] I hope the Colonial Secretary will give us farther information. If the intention is to hand over a complete railway system to those who come after us, be it so. I think at this juncture the Government are wise in adopting a bold public works policy. The justification for this Bill is I think the loan proposals of past years, and the works which have been construc-

ted out of revenue. I have much pleasure in supporting the second reading.

HON. E. McLARTY (South-West): I have pleasure also in supporting the second reading of the Bill, because I realise that without borrowed money it is impossible for this Government or any Government to develop the country. In my opinion it requires to be developed. The strong objection I have to the Bill is the late hour it has come down to the House. The same position obtained last year. We have been wasting our time for months waiting for the business of the country to come before us, and now almost at the eleventh hour we have the Loan Bill for no less than two and half millions of money which we are asked to consider almost in a few moments. Such an important measure as this should have been introduced at an earlier stage of the session, and members should be given a greater opportunity to consider its provisions. The Railway Bill that we will have shortly before us I am afraid will not receive the consideration from the Government or members that their importance deserves. It will be within the recollection of members that last year we had three Railway Bills brought before us on the last day of the session. I have always been proud of the fact that I was one of the few members who voted against the Bill under those conditions, and the action of those members who voted on the same side as myself has been clearly shown to be right, and that we were justified in the vote which we gave on that occasion. We have here four Railway Bills which it is proposed to bring down this session, and I should like to have more information than we had last year at all events before I shall feel justified in giving the Bills my support. We have the Bills certainly at an earlier period than we had last year; but with my friend Mr. Moss I should like full information in regard to the Norseman Railway.

THE COLONIAL SECRETARY: There is a sheet before members giving a lot of information.

HON. E. McLARTY: I should be the last to oppose the Norseman Railway if it were shown that that railway would open up the mineral resources of that pa-

of the State. But it seems to me if we are to build a railway 100 miles to a population of 1,600 people, that good reasons should be put forward to justify this enormous expense. I have always raised my voice against the construction of a railway from Coolgardie to Esperance, and I am afraid this—although I am assured it is not the case—is the first step to construct that line to the coast. I know it has been argued by members from the goldfields, and no doubt they are voicing the feelings and opinions of those people living on the fields, that they should be connected with the coast at the nearest point. If we take into consideration the enormous amount the country has expended in giving facilities to the goldfields in their early stages, it can only be expected that we want this line to connect the principal port of the State with the goldfields. The Railway Bills which are to be brought before us will require a good deal of consideration, because it is generally agreed that borrowed money should be spent on reproductive works only, and as long as that is done the country is perfectly safe. From the judicious expenditure of two and a-half millions added to the present debt if we have little to fear; but I warn the Government that some of these railways require careful consideration, and I have grave doubts as to their being reproductive works, that is directly reproductive works. There is a necessity for railways to open up the country and induce settlement, thus indirectly paying. But I am satisfied that some of these lines will not pay interest and working expenses for some years to come. There is another thing: it struck me whether all parts of the country were being treated fairly. We see a line to the Norseman field for a distance of 100 miles proposed, and another railway 50 miles in the same part of the country. The Government would be acting wiser and they distributed the sum of money they intended to expend more evenly over the country and not built all the railways in one locality. This might give an impetus to other districts. It is not fair to put down miles and miles of railway in one locality and ignore other parts of the State justly deserving consideration. It would have been better in my opinion to build a few lines, and only a few miles to

make a start, so as to help all parts of the State. I express the hope that this money will be carefully expended, and if that is done I do not fear the result from borrowing it. I believe the country can afford to borrow, and it will tend to the prosperity of the State, so long as it is not expended in sops to different districts, a few thousand here or a few thousand somewhere else that may be well done without. I trust the Railway Bills will be brought down as early as possible. It is certainly late in the session now. I hope members will have information so as to judge whether they should pass these Bills, and if not, for my part I shall feel much inclined to do as I did last year. If the Government do not afford all the information that I think they should give members I shall feel inclined to put the Bills off until the next session.

HON. R. F. SHOLL (North): I do not propose to say much in regard to this Bill and the many items on which it is proposed to expend money, and which are explained in the schedule. I may say it appears to me, notwithstanding the desire of everyone in this House and outside, the importance of developing the agricultural portions of the State and settling people on the land is a desirable end indeed. There are a number of railways which are to cost a large sum of money, and I think it would have been more statesmanlike and wiser on the part of the Government if they had waited and seen how the agricultural lines now in course of construction had answered, and whether these fulfilled the objects for which they were built, or whether they would be a perpetual drain on the finances. The only railway that has really been tried is the one to Greenhills, and we know that has been an absolute failure. It has been stated, I think with some force, that the cause of the failure was owing to the short distance of the line—14 miles; that the reason it does not pay is that farmers, during the time of slackness, prefer to cart their produce to the nearest town, York, rather than send it by train, and as they have horses idle they can do this. I cannot help thinking the Government have launched out too strongly in their proposal to build the numerous agricultural railways until they ascertained if those lines already

sanctioned had been a success. There is an item of £44,000 for the Bunbury Harbour Works. I think it would be a saving to the State if the Government of the day would realise that this is going to be a continual sink. There is a continual expenditure on this harbour.

THE COLONIAL SECRETARY: The amount is already spent.

HON. R. F. SHOLL: Then for my part I hope the item will be struck out, because I think the Government have no right to spend money and then come to the House afterwards for sanction to borrow it.

THE COLONIAL SECRETARY: The other Government spent it; we have to pay.

HON. R. F. SHOLL: This was one of Sir John Forrest's failures—the Bunbury Harbour. Mr. O'Connor did not advise the building of that harbour. With his professional knowledge he knew that it would always be a source of trouble owing to the siltage. The reason given at the time was that the inner harbour scheme would cost too much money; but it appears to me the present harbour will cost more than the inner harbour scheme had it been carried out. Mr. O'Connor said that the first expenditure was too heavy because the money was not available. He told me himself that he thought the outer scheme should not be carried out. I do not know who has spent the £44,000.

THE COLONIAL SECRETARY: The Rason Government.

HON. R. F. SHOLL: The present Treasurer was a member of that Government. There is an item of £114,000 for the development of agriculture, and I would like the Colonial Secretary when addressing the House to give us an idea how it is proposed to expend that sum. We have a large amount for agricultural railways; for the development of agriculture we also have £114,000. It would be interesting to know how the money is to be expended. I cannot help thinking that the Government have given the whole of their attention to the South-Western portion of the country, and have neglected other parts of this huge State. There appear to be sops to the "birthplace" and the constituency represented by a prominent Minister of the Government. I strongly protest with other members and take exception to the

expenditure of £175,000 on public buildings. I think if we want to erect public buildings we ought to do so out of surplus revenue if we have any. But I do not think we are likely to have much. If we cannot build nonproductive works such as public buildings out of consolidated revenue, I think we should do without them for some time. There may be exceptions, but with regard to this item I think the money might have been found. I see very little in the schedule in regard to moneys proposed to be expended in the northern part of the State. The needs of the North are not extensive, and I think a little more liberality might be shown by the Government when going to the money market to raise funds for necessary works. It may be stated that large sums will be expended on a stock route from Hall's Creek to the Eastern Goldfields. I would point out, however, that this does not benefit only those resident in the Kimberleys by enabling them to bring down their stock overland: it has another purpose, as stated by the Minister for Mines when he said he was going to do all he could to supply the goldfields with cheap meat by opening up a stock route from the North to the Eastern Goldfields. So this work is not purely to benefit the stock-owners in the northern part, but is intended also to benefit residents on the goldfields by providing cheaper meat. I will also be largely the means of stocking fresh country in those parts with stock from the northern areas. This stock route, I may say, will not serve the whole of the North; it will serve only those near Hall's Creek and in East Kimberley. The West Kimberley cattle will not be able to take advantage of it, on account of the tick. I really do not know what provision the Government are making with regard to the payment of interest on these works, none of which are likely to be directly reproductive. No one anticipates that these agricultural railways are going to pay even working expenses for years to come, and I question whether they will ever pay interest or sinking fund. Very little provision is made, so far as I can see, for payment of the interest on this huge sum proposed to be borrowed. One hundred thousand a year is suggested as the cost of this borrowing; then the loss or

working expenses of these railways, for I suppose three or four years, will be another £50,000 or £60,000. After the Government making so much fuss about the paltry £60,000 which they hope to derive from the much-debated land tax, I cannot congratulate Ministers on their foresight or their policy in bringing forward a schedule of this kind, of which little if any is likely to be at all directly reproductive, nor likely to provide interest and sinking fund for at any rate many years to come. I do not wish to say more, but I certainly am not enamoured of the details of the schedule showing the purposes for which it is proposed to raise this money.

HON. E. M. CLARKE (South-West): It is not my intention to give a silent vote on this question, and in reviewing the matter the only crumb of satisfaction one gets is that it is not the intention of the Government for some years to borrow all this money. Were it the fact that they intended to borrow the money at once and construct these works, as one would imply from this Bill, I should unhesitatingly vote against it. When speaking on the Address-in-Reply, I said we were confronted by the fact that there was a depression, and I then said it would increase. I am sorry to say that what I then predicted has to a certain extent been verified, for during the last two months we have spent £70,000 more than we have earned. Would any sane persons carrying on a business, and finding they were spending more than they earned, proceed to borrow more money to spend. I defy anyone to say that these works when constructed are not going to be any burden on the State. I do not say this because I am opposed to the construction of these railways, but at the present time they are going far-and-away too fast. I could ask anybody whether he sincerely believes these railways are going to pay, said many years ago, and I repeat now, at the day when railways are going to pay directly has gone by. I defy the commissioner of Railways or any gentleman in this House to disprove that. The time is coming when the producer from the land will demand—and it will be in the interests of the State to grant the demand—that his produce shall be carried

at a far lower rate than is charged at the present time. I ask the House to contradict me if I am not right. Are we not now confronted by the fact that produce from the other States, although there is no duty on it, can be landed here by water cheaper than we can get the greater portion of our produce to the market within the State? I am not going to find fault with the fact that money is not to be spent in my district, or that money is to be spent in another district; but this I do claim for Bunbury, that it will be a nice lookout for other parts of the State when Bunbury goes under; for the simple reason that from its geographical position Bunbury is bound to be one of the coming harbours in Western Australia, so far as we now know. I am not going to predict that there will not in the future be another harbour on our coast as good as Bunbury; but so far as we can see at present Bunbury is going to be the port of the South-West, notwithstanding what any Government may spend or refuse to spend there. I am not going to say anything as to the amount now proposed to be spent in that district. I am perfectly satisfied, and I believe the Government have distributed the money fairly and equitably. There is one thing I would like to say, that I do candidly think we are going a lot too fast. Here we are getting into debt, and what do we do to recoup ourselves? We borrow some more; and notwithstanding anything that may be said to the contrary, we will have to put our hands in our pockets to pay the working expenses of these new railways when constructed. I do not say this as a protest against this Bill; but I think it my duty to say exactly what I think, and that is that we are going too fast. I would rather, before this money is spent, see the Government looking round to curtail expenses. They have tried to do one thing I suggested before, that is a tax on land values, and that is now one thing gone. We are simply exhausting ourselves before it comes to the real struggle. I am not opposing the Bill, but I cannot give a silent vote. We are going into the borrowing market too fast, and the only hope I have is that the Government will not spend the money until they have gone carefully into the merits and demerits of the rail-

ways, and will then decide on those which in their judgment are best and most likely to return some sort of revenue to the State.

THE COLONIAL SECRETARY (in reply): I should like to say a few words in reply. It is not my intention to reply in detail to the criticisms which have been levelled at the different items, because I may say the debate has assumed a rather unusual character for a Loan Bill. This is simply an authority to the Government to borrow two millions and a-half, and the items set forth in the schedule will of course have to be approved again in the form of loan schedules. In the case of railways, separate Bills will have to be brought down authorising their construction. Mr. Clarke said he trusted the Government would give careful consideration to every item in the schedule before spending the money. I would like to repeat, for the hon. member's information, that not one penny can be expended without the approval of Parliament. This is only an authority to raise two and a-half millions of money. Each year loan schedules will be brought in and each item considered; each railway will require a Bill; and full information will then be given of the reasons why the particular railway or work should be constructed. In the case of railways, the proposals will have to be approved three times before the money is actually expended; and for that reason I have not thought it necessary to reply now to the various criticisms. Each railway Bill or other work, as it comes along, will be accompanied by information regarding the particular work, and that information will be placed before the House, and every member will then have an opportunity of judging for himself whether each particular work is justified or not. Mr. Kingsmill interjected when I was speaking in regard to the lighthouses proposed to be established on the North-West coast—I am sorry Mr. Sholl is not in his place, as I desired to draw his attention to these lighthouses and to the other things which the North is getting in this Loan Bill. I find that one of the lighthouses is to be on Cape Inscription, the north end of Dirk Hartog Island; one on Point Cloates —

HON. W. KINGSMILL: That is a bad one.

THE COLONIAL SECRETARY: Although I admit the hon. member has considerable nautical knowledge, I must ask the House not to accept that statement, because if it is desired I can supply members with information in support of this lighthouse, notwithstanding the hon. member's opinion, which he did not support by any facts. There is to be one 90 miles south of Bidout Island —

HON. W. KINGSMILL: That is another bad one.

THE COLONIAL SECRETARY: And another at Cape Leveque, at the entrance to King Sound.

HON. W. KINGSMILL: That is a good one—two of them are all right.

THE COLONIAL SECRETARY: I am glad the hon. member thinks some of these lighthouses justified. Exception has been taken by some members to items on the schedule, and Mr. Lotou drew attention to the item "Agricultural Railways, £100,000." He seemed to think this was a loose method of doing business, permitting railways to be built anywhere. But the schedule does not authorise the construction of railways. I would draw attention to the fact that the Government have been in power for about six months only, and after attaining office they had to meet Parliament, and at the same time to compile the necessary information for these railway projects. For this purpose many months of careful consideration were needed to acquire all the information as to land available, the cost of construction, the population and the routes. Mr. Moss took great exception to the item for the Fremantle dock. I much regret his attitude yesterday, and the attitude of some other members who take so parochial a view of everything. After all, each province represented here covers a great expanse of country; and I believe the House was so constituted in order that members should not have parochial ideas about roads and bridges, but should legislate for the State generally. That object seems to have been lost sight of yesterday, when members found fault with the schedule because it did not contain items for their own electorates. I regret the strong personal attack Mr. Moss saw fit to make on my colleague the Minister for Works (Hon.

J. Price). I content myself with saying, now that the hon. member has availed himself of his position as a member of the House to make that strong personal attack, I hope he is quite satisfied; and if his own conscience acquits him, if he thinks he has done right to a man who has been so generous and so fair to him as has the Minister for Works, that is all I have to say on the matter. Coming back to the question of the dock, Mr. Moss made the uncalled for statement that he doubted the sincerity of the Government proposal to construct this work. That statement is not supported by any facts. He said also he would sooner have nothing at all in the schedule than a miserable £50,000. But there is also another £59,000 unexpended, making £109,000. I need not say much on this point, because Mr. Moss's statements have been completely answered by Captain Laurie, who, though he did not set himself out to answer Mr. Moss, made a speech which for that very reason carries all the greater weight. In reply to Mr. Moss, Captain Laurie said if the Harbour Trust had been given power to construct the dock, they would have taken at least 12 or 18 months to spend from £50,000 to £100,000, and that the dock could not be completed under four or five years. That is a complete answer to Mr. Moss.

HON. M. L. MOSS: No, it is not; because the total of the Loan Bill is your commitment for three years.

THE COLONIAL SECRETARY: That is another bald assumption.

HON. M. L. MOSS: The Government cannot come down with any other Loan Bill before three years are over.

THE COLONIAL SECRETARY: When mentioning how this loan would affect the population *per capita*, I calculated the increase of population till June 1908, only 18 months from now; therefore, according to Captain Laurie, whose knowledge of the subject we must respect, he £109,000 available is as much as can be spent in that time. Mr. Moss said there was no reason for delay; other Governments had satisfied themselves that the dock was necessary, and all information was in the Public Works Department. In reply I can only say it is a wonder the hon. member, when for considerable periods a Minister in two succes-

sive Governments, did not get the work put in hand. No Government seems to have made any real move, except when the harbour was being constructed by the Forrest Government, until the present Government took the matter up. We cannot possibly state in this schedule the full cost of the dock. As to the Public Works Department records, the hon. member is quite right. There is a mass of information about the dock, and the estimates of cost range from £250,000 to £300,000 and up to a million, according to the position in which the dock is placed. The site of the dock has not yet been selected. The selection of the site will occupy a considerable time, in view of the cost and importance of the work. When the site is fixed the sum provided will be spent in making a start, and the work of construction will occupy quite as much time as Captain Laurie anticipates. I think I have shown sufficiently clearly whether the Government desire to fulfill their promise to construct a dock at Fremantle. Mr. Moss, whom I mention particularly because he seemed to be the main critic of the schedule, took great exception to our spending £175,000 on public buildings. But the hon. member surely recollects that last session he and Mr. Kingsmill brought down a loan schedule appropriating £70,000 odd for the same purpose.

HON. W. KINGSMILL: To which you strongly objected.

THE COLONIAL SECRETARY: To which I strongly objected. To begin with, that £70,000 has to be paid out of this item of £175,000. The £70,000 was paid out of loan suspense account; and now when the loan is to be floated, the amount will be taken from the suspense account and the matter cleared up. Out of the £175,000 only about half is still unspent.

HON. M. L. MOSS: Was the whole amount of that appropriation spent?

THE COLONIAL SECRETARY: The greater portion of it. As Mr. Kingsmill interjects, I did object to loan moneys being used for public buildings, maintaining that no Government have a right to construct public buildings out of loan. Certainly loan moneys should be spent in reproductive works. But the Government at that time had a much larger

revenue, larger than the present revenue by some £120,000. It is now a question of leaving certain public buildings alone, or constructing them out of loan. That is one reason this discussion would have been better left till we reached the Loan Estimates, which will show that the greater portion of the amount available from the £175,000 will be spent on the Hospital for Insane at Claremont. Mr. Moss and Mr. Kingsmill know the piteous conditions under which those unfortunates exist at Fremantle. The question is simply, can we allow those unfortunate patients to live under such conditions? The men and women are living and sleeping wherever they can find a corner. I should like some members to visit that institution, and I think they would then forgive the Government for building the Claremont Hospital out of loan.

HON. E. McLARTY: Take us all down.

THE COLONIAL SECRETARY: I should be pleased to take the hon. member, or any other member, to see the institution. If he were to see it, no word of mine would be needed to justify the present or any other Government in constructing such public buildings out of loan. The only other items are the Old Men's Depôt, a few other necessary works, and additions to the Perth Public Library and Museum. We were very careful to confine the item to permanent buildings. All small buildings, such as schools and police stations, will be constructed out of revenue. Buildings like the Museum, the Art Gallery, and the Hospital for Insane, are built for all time. They will be in existence a hundred years hence, and will probably be as valuable then as now. They are permanent buildings; and seeing we are providing a sinking fund for each of our loans, there is some justification for constructing those buildings with loan moneys.

HON. M. L. MOSS: You hardly include the public abattoirs at Kalgoorlie in that category?

THE COLONIAL SECRETARY: I do not know about that. The health of the people is an important consideration.

HON. M. L. MOSS: Private enterprise carried out that work very well at Fremantle.

THE COLONIAL SECRETARY: But private enterprise would not be likely to

do so at Kalgoorlie. I will not discuss that question. Some members took exception to the Coolgardie - Norseman Railway, which I shall not defend at the present moment. Mr. Moss said very airily that the line is not justified. It is easy to make such a statement; but will it not be better for the hon. member to wait until complete information is brought down, in addition to the printed paper distributed to members? He can then judge whether the line is necessary. I do not think he is justified in making such a statement, his knowledge of the goldfields being very slight.

HON. M. L. MOSS: I know what is on some of the departmental files about that project.

THE COLONIAL SECRETARY: I suppose his knowledge of the goldfields was gained by visiting Kalgoorlie on one or two festive occasions; yet he says, without a word of information, that the line is not justified.

HON. M. L. MOSS (in explanation): I have not obtained my information on those festive occasions. My information as to the railway has been obtained from the departmental files. Mr. Drew has just interjected that he hopes the Minister will bring all the reports of that railway project.

THE COLONIAL SECRETARY: The hon. member need not be afraid. He can get all the information. If he will refer to the returns before him, he will see that the Dundas Goldfield, though labouring under its present disabilities without a railway or proper water supply, has produced nearly £1,500,000 worth of gold, and to-day the field is looking better than ever. That is all I intend to say on the question. This is not the time to discuss such items. Mr. Moss also took exception to spending loan moneys on the rabbit-proof fence. A large proportion of the sum provided was spent by the Government of which he was a member.

HON. M. L. MOSS: I took no exception to that. I said it was a matter of regret.

THE COLONIAL SECRETARY: Perhaps it is a matter of regret; but a work which has cost several hundreds of thousands will be useless unless it is at once completed. It is a question whether the

thousands of pounds already expended should be thrown away, or whether the work should be completed. The Government saw that the only way out of the difficulty was to continue this work out of loan. I do not think there is anything else I need refer to. I am satisfied with the way in which members have received the Bill. With one or two exceptions members agree that the Government have taken the right course in going in for a vigorous public works policy and borrowing money.

Question put and passed.

Bill read a second time.

IN COMMITTEE:

Clauses 1 to 7—agreed to.

First Schedule:

Item—Additions and Improvements on Opened Railways, £51,600:

HON. M. L. MOSS: Attention had been drawn on other occasions to the powers of the Commissioner of Railways in connection with the expenditure of money on opened railways. The power to expend this money was given by Section 17 of the Railways Act. Several members had complained that the Commissioner, with Ministerial approval, had practically made a duplication on the Eastern Railway from a point near Perth to Spencer's Brook. He would like to know if the Government had considered the expediency or otherwise of curtailing the powers of the Commissioner contained in Section 17 of the Railways Act. He doubted the advisability of this large amount of money being expended without the cognizance of Parliament. A large portion of the money was revenue earned by the Railway Department, but on the loan schedule there was £51,600 allocated for this particular work.

THE COLONIAL SECRETARY: There had been a great deal of criticism and comment about the latitude the Commissioner assumingly had under the Railways Act in making additions and improvements to opened lines; but the expenditure had to receive the approval of the Governor-in-Council. The Govern-

ment had had the matter under consideration at various times, and it was under consideration now whether it was not wise to make some alteration in the Act. Farther than that he could not say. He believed a better system was in vogue some years ago when the work was carried out by the Public Works Department on a parliamentary vote. It was a question whether it would not be wise to have a better control over this expenditure than was provided by the Railways Act.

HON. M. L. MOSS: It would not be so bad if the expenditure was made with the approval of the Governor, but it was only on the approval of the Minister, the initiative being with the Commissioner. Without wishing to cast the slightest reflection on the Commissioner, he had an opportunity of perusing the minutes to the Minister, and these were couched in terms throwing responsibility on the Minister if he did not accept the Commissioner's advice. There ought to be drastic alteration, and he was glad the Government were considering that. Latterly we had had an opportunity through the Press of comparing the working of our railways with the railways in Queensland, and while he admitted the cost of water and labour were more in this country, in his (Mr. Moss's) opinion, there seemed to be some reason why people should commence to complain. We could not be too careful when confronted with a shrinking revenue and when it was important to the country to save large sums of money that some steps were not taken to curb in some way the enormous powers of the Commissioner. The Government would, during the next recess, have the responsibility cast on them of either renewing the appointment of the present Commissioner, making a new appointment, or deciding how the railways should be run in the future. This was a matter that demanded the earliest careful consideration of the Government.

HON. J. M. DREW: If the Commissioner wished to make improvements to existing lines, or if he wished to duplicate the line from Perth to Albany, he could do so without the matter being referred to Cabinet. The Commissioner recommended to the Minister, and the Minister

could approve of the work being carried out. One did not wish to cast any reflection on the Commissioner, for one felt certain his object was to serve the best interests of the country; but the duplication of a line such as that from Perth to Albany should not be effected on Ministerial approval without the sanction of Cabinet. The Commissioner was a conscientious man, and endeavoured to perform his duties in a conscientious manner.

HON. E. M. CLARKE: It was fresh within our memories that a line was proposed to be constructed from somewhere along the South-Western Railway to Fremantle, the excuse given being that it was to relieve the congested state of the Perth railway yard, so that timber to be shipped at Fremantle could go along this new line. Notwithstanding that the line was duplicated from Perth to Armadale another line was being brought forward now. The Commissioner conscientiously carried out his duties and had fairly well succeeded. Mr. George did not care a bit about the policy of the Government; he wished to make the railways pay. He (Mr. Clarke) strongly objected to anyone having the power to spend public money in building practically new railways. Twelve months ago the whole of the sleepers from Brunswick to Bunbury were pulled up and new sleepers put down and the rails relaid. A short time ago these sleepers had to be pulled up again to enable heavier rails to be laid. A cautious thinking man would have realised, when putting down new sleepers twelve months ago, that in the near future heavier rails would be required, and would either obtain the heavier rails quicker or deferred putting down the sleepers at that time. The whole of the cost of the relaying seemed in this case to have been thrown away. While the Commissioner was carrying on the railway system in a conscientious manner it was wrong that any one man should have power to spend such large sums of money.

At 6:30, the CHAIRMAN left the Chair.

At 7:30, Chair resumed.

Schedule 1:

HON. M. L. MOSS: Would the Minister agree now to report progress? Before farther consideration was given to the proposed railways there should be laid on the table all papers available in the Works and Lands Departments, including particularly engineers' reports and the reports of land officers as to land available for settlement within reasonable distance of these lines. Departmental records must be readily available, and members were not justified in voting on items in the schedules unless the information desired was supplied immediately.

THE COLONIAL SECRETARY: The request was not at all reasonable. When the Bills for the construction of the railways came before this House, that information would be afforded. The hon. member must be aware that this Bill merely authorised the raising of money, and did not authorise the construction of works. The information asked for, including maps, was now before another place and could not conveniently be withdrawn.

HON. M. L. MOSS: A Loan Bill earmarked moneys for specific purposes, and went a long way in the direction of pledging the House to the construction of specific works; hence it was not fair to rush a loan schedule through a thin House. The first item among the new railways was the Coolgardie-Norseman line, and he had a strong objection to voting £81,000 for this in the absence of any information. The Minister should supply the information at the disposal of the Government in regard to this line, before asking members to vote on the items in the schedule. He was aware that reports on the Coolgardie-Norseman line existed, and the production of at least one of those reports would condemn the proposition.

THE COLONIAL SECRETARY: Then Parliament would not pass the Bill for the construction of the railway.

HON. M. L. MOSS: We were now asked in a thin House practically to assent to an expenditure of £81,000 for this line, and he was not going to do that on the information at his disposal. If the Minister would not report progress, he (Mr. Moss) desired full information on the item.

THE COLONIAL SECRETARY: The hon. member should know he was taking an altogether unusual course. If information must be afforded in regard to this item, a similar demand might be made by other members in regard to other items. While information regarding this item might be available, as the Bill for the railway was now before another place, similar information regarding other items was not yet to hand, because certain other lines were not to be gone on with just now. The Port Hedland-Marble Bar, Newcastle-Bolgart, Mt. Magnet-Black Range Railways were not proposed for immediate construction, the sums quoted in the schedule being merely an estimate of their cost. Parliament would not be committed to the building of the Norseman line if the schedule passed.

HON. M. L. MOSS: It would.

THE COLONIAL SECRETARY: The hon. member knew that such was not the case. Only a few days since mention was made of the fact that money borrowed for the Fremantle dock had been reappropriated to other works.

HON. M. L. MOSS: Which was a wrong proceeding.

THE COLONIAL SECRETARY: It was not. That money having been borrowed at a time when the Government could not, owing to indefiniteness as to the future extension of the harbour, decide the question of site, the money had to be reappropriated to other purposes rather than resort to further borrowing. Some information in regard to this item was already before the House in the sheets distributed to members. The length of the line was 107 miles, gauge 3ft. 6in., weight of rails 45lbs., sleepers half-round, gradient 1 in 40, radius of curves 1 in 45, estimated cost of construction £81,000, rails and fastenings £66,500; total cost £147,500, practically a light railway in a dry country, the cost per mile £1,339 being particularly cheap. Little land was under cultivation there. The mineral yield from the field was 372,506ozs., valued at £1,392,130. The estimated traffic was given at 10,000 tons per annum—2,000 tons of through traffic and 8,000 tons of local firewood. This was more information than was usually supplied on a Loan Bill. The items had been before the

House for some time and had been debated, and the course which the hon. member asked the House to take was altogether unreasonable.

HON. M. L. MOSS was not asking the House to adopt any course, but merely that progress be reported in order that information might be supplied in regard to the proposed works. What would be thought if the directors of a company came forward with a proposal to raise money earmarked for specific works, and afterwards applied the money to other purposes? Because moneys had been reappropriated in the past, that was no argument why it was a right course; on the contrary, the practice had been condemned by nearly every member of both Houses. A schedule to a Loan Bill became an Act of Parliament when passed, and was equivalent to an undertaking on the part of the Government that the money would be expended on the scheduled works. Unless the information asked for were supplied, he would vote against the item. While the amount appearing in the schedule was £81,000, it now appeared that with rails and fastenings the total cost of the line would be £147,000. This would be a line 107 miles long, to serve 1,600 people. Would so expensive a line be constructed to any other old goldfield in Australia? Though the output of the Dundas field was considerable, the monthly statistics seemed to show that the goldfield had made no great progress since shortly after its inception. This project was evidently the beginning of the Esperance Railway, which would compete with the Eastern Railway, so that neither line would pay. The line to Norseman would produce an agitation for its continuance to Esperance, and for the construction of Esperance harbour works. Once connected by rail with Esperance, the Eastern Goldfields would be in closer touch with Adelaide than with Fremantle; and we had not now the benefit of protective duties. He moved that progress be reported.

THE CHAIRMAN: The hon. member, having discussed the item, could not make that motion.

THE COLONIAL SECRETARY: The course the hon. member adopted was unusual. The Bill authorised the borrowing of a certain sum. On the first

item under "New Railways," Mr. Moss asked that progress be reported until certain information was forthcoming. Complete information would be given when the Railway Bills were received from the Assembly. The hon. member's suggestion was impracticable, for other members might require similar information regarding the remaining railways. The Loan Bill did not bind the Government to construct the lines. Though this Bill must have a schedule, the money borrowed could be reappropriated.

HON. G. RANDELL: If any Railway Bill were thrown out, presumably the Government would not borrow the money.

THE COLONIAL SECRETARY: The money would be borrowed by instalments; and then probably, before the total authorisation was completed, some other work would have to be initiated. The Government could not construct railways without passing Railway Bills. Requests for information on other than railway Bills might be justifiable.

HON. J. M. DREW: Last night the Colonial Secretary prevented him from speaking. Early last evening he had asked for an adjournment of the debate, and had promised to throw no obstacle in the way. But during the debate certain developments rendered it necessary for him to speak, and the House prevented him from moving the adjournment. Though members here were supposed to prevent hasty legislation, yet they endeavoured in two hours to dispose of a Loan Bill for 2½ millions. He endorsed everything Mr. Moss said. Before passing this schedule all information as to the proposed railways should be furnished. So far we had no facts and no arguments. The Minister said there was no harm in passing the loan schedule, as the money could be used for other purposes.

THE COLONIAL SECRETARY: With the consent of Parliament.

HON. J. M. DREW: That was like asking Parliament to go blindfold. The servants of a public company, if they acted contrary to the resolutions of the directors, would be liable to prosecution. On the third reading of the Bill he would make what some might consider a second-reading speech, and would give some interesting information as to several of these railway projects.

HON. E. M. CLARKE: If anything were wanted to convince him that the Bill needed careful consideration, the remarks of the Colonial Secretary would supply that want; for he asked us to sanction a loan of over two millions for certain railways and other works. Before we attempted to borrow money we should know that it was absolutely needed for specific purposes. We should know that every item in the schedule was necessary. If Parliament sanctioned the borrowing of money, a Government who would spend it could always be found.

HON. F. CONNOR: Had the Coolgardie-Norseman line been definitely surveyed?

THE COLONIAL SECRETARY: Yes; but possibly there might be a ten-mile deviation. Full information would be given on the Railway Bill.

HON. J. M. DREW moved that progress be reported and leave given to sit again.

Motion put, and a division called for.

THE COLONIAL SECRETARY: As it was the desire of the Committee, he would withdraw the call for a division and consent to report progress.

THE CHAIRMAN: There was no Standing Order providing for the withdrawal of a call for a division.

THE COLONIAL SECRETARY: On one occasion when Sir George Shenton was President, the call for a division was withdrawn.

THE CHAIRMAN: If there was only one member on either side, the division could not be recorded.

HON. J. W. HACKETT: If the Colonial Secretary crossed to the other side there would be no division; it would save the time of the Committee.

THE CHAIRMAN: There was no provision in the Standing Orders for such a case.

HON. J. W. HACKETT: It had been the practice for 14 years.

Division resulted as follows:—

Ayes	14
Noes	2
<hr/>			
Majority for	12
<hr/>			

AYES.
 Hon. E. M. Clarke
 Hon. J. D. Connolly
 Hon. J. M. Drew
 Hon. J. T. Glowrey
 Hon. J. W. Hackett
 Hon. R. Laurie
 Hon. M. L. Moss
 Hon. W. Patrick
 Hon. C. A. Piesse
 Hon. G. Randell
 Hon. R. F. Sholl
 Hon. J. A. Thomson
 Hon. J. W. Wright
 Hon. V. Hamersley
 (Teller).

NOES.
 Hon. F. Connor
 Hon. T. F. O. Brimage
 (Teller).

Motion thus passed. Progress reported, and leave given to sit again.

BILL—APPROPRIATION.

SECOND READING.

THE COLONIAL SECRETARY (Hon. J. D. Connolly) in moving the second reading said: I know it is not usual for the Leader of the House to make lengthy remarks on the Appropriation Bill; in fact I was looking up the precedents for the last six or seven years, and I find only on one occasion did the Leader of the House make any remarks. When Mr. Kingsmill was Leader he simply moved the second reading of the Bill, which went through all its stages in the one sitting. The only exception to that was when Mr. Drew was Leader of the House, and he spoke for some few minutes on his own department. I think he was Minister for Lands on that occasion. I may also add it would be very unusual for the Leader of the House to make a second financial statement; that has already been made in another place, therefore it would be only wasting the time of the House, and probably wearying members, and indeed I do not think it is expected I should do so. At any rate at the risk of wearying members, I would like to make a few remarks on the department which I control, the Colonial Secretary's Department, and if members look at the schedule they will notice it is a department involving an expenditure out of the annual revenue of £350,000. It consists of quite a number of sub-departments; I think there are some 12 sub-departments altogether. The alterations in the salaries in that department are in accordance with the classification made by the Public Service Commissioner. Members know that the fixing of the salaries now is really outside the control of the Minister, except

as to certain officers exempt from the Public Service Act. This matter is in the hands of the Public Service Commissioner, and as members are aware he made a classification a few months ago, and any increase or decrease—I do not know that there are any decreases—but any increases appearing in the salaries of the Colonial Secretary's department have simply taken place in connection with the Public Service Commissioner's classification. Members will notice that there is a net increase in the total vote of the Colonial Secretary's department of £4,472. At first glance members will be inclined to cavil at this, as it is generally said that the Government should economise. We have economised, and the whole expenditure is a great deal less this year than last. Although at first sight there appears to be an increase of £4,472, in reality there is not an increase at all, because this item is partly made up by the building of the Coolgardie Consumptive Hospital, which cost £2,500. In the ordinary way this vote would come out of public works expenditure, but in this case it was considered that it should come out of the Colonial Secretary's vote. That accounts for £2,500 of the £4,472. The staff of the hospital costs £400, which brings the amount up to nearly £3,000. If consumptive patients are taken from Perth and other hospitals the cost of those hospitals will be decreased. Members will notice in another department, the harbours and lights, there is an increase of £2,053. Although at first sight that appears to be an increase, in reality it is not an increase at all. The system proposed this year is that all the northern jetties, the Carnarvon jetty, the Broome jetty, and other jetties, shall be leased, and therefore no item had to appear on the Estimates for the working expenses, the wharfinger's salary, and so on. The Government have now decided to work the jetties departmentally; therefore the item is provided, and the total of that department is £2,053.

HON. R. F. SHOLL: Why have the Government taken them over?

THE COLONIAL SECRETARY: It is thought that they will be worked more satisfactorily. The contracts were not always satisfactory. It is estimated there will be a gross profit of £3,492. We shall

receive from the jetties that amount in excess of the money received last year, so that although the expenditure has to be provided for, it comes in on the other side as revenue. These few items I have mentioned show only an apparent increase in the Colonial Secretary's Department, because all the Ministers have been careful, myself included, to reduce the expenditure where possible. I just point that out to members so that they may not think that the Colonial Secretary's Department is running to extravagance and increasing the vote every year. There is an increase in the harbour and lights, lunacy, gaols, and police, in all £7,276. Members will see, without explanation, that the departments of gaols, lunacy, and police will increase as the population increases. As our population increases so I suppose will our inmates of the gaols and asylums. It is satisfactory to know the cost of the police per head of the population is decreasing; in 1904 the cost was 9s. 10d. per head, in 1905-6 it was reduced by 4d. per head, or to 9s. 5d. Although the total cost of hospitals for the insane has increased, it is satisfactory to note that the cost per patient is becoming less. This is accounted for, to a certain extent, by the increased fees the Controller General is able to obtain from patients. It is not that the expenses in connection with patients have been cut down. In the year 1904 the cost per patient was 15s., in 1905 it was 13s. 5d., while this year, up to the 30th September, it has averaged 12s. 4d. There has also been a reorganisation, and I expect to effect a considerable saving by the amalgamation of the Medical and Health Departments. In the past there has been a good deal of overlapping. An officer of one department would do a certain work, and then an officer from the other department would follow him, as for instance in the matter of sea quarantine. In my opinion, and I think it is also the opinion of most Ministers who have had control of the department, it was a mistake that the Medical and Health were made separate departments, their work being practically the same. For instance in most towns there is a district medical officer who is an officer of the Medical Department; but if something is required for the Health Department, that department, if it has not an

officer in the town, has to send one there. The same thing applies to factory inspections; and this amalgamation will effect considerable saving in the cost for inspections and clerical work, besides removing a cause of considerable irritation to owners of factories. Factory inspection includes a health provision, and the position frequently arose that an inspector from the office of the Inspector of Factories would inspect a factory and see that all was in proper order, and he would be followed by an inspector from the Central Board of Health going over the same ground. The inspection of machinery is under the control of the Chief Inspector of Boilers, so that there have been three inspectors doing practically the same work; and this on many occasions has caused considerable irritation and inconvenience to owners of factories. If any farther information is desired by members in regard to particular items in my department, I shall be glad to supply it; and while I do not pretend to be able to give a full explanation of all items in connection with other departments, if information is desired in regard to these, I think I can satisfy members as to what the different items are for.

HON. R. F. SHOLL: Can you give any information as to the Labour Bureau?

THE COLONIAL SECRETARY: I can give that information. Then as to gaols, it is satisfactory to note that the work done in our gaols has been on the increase. Last year the work performed inside the prison, including buildings, ran into the good round sum of £3,000. This means of course a saving in the upkeep of the gaols, while it is also better for the prisoners to be profitably engaged. At the same time care has been taken not to enter into competition with those outside, as is done in some of the other States—later on, that point may have to be reconsidered. These are a few remarks which I thought members might expect from me in connection with my own department; and if there is any other item in the schedule upon which members desire information I shall be glad to supply it. I move that the Bill be now read a second time.

Question put and passed.

Bill read a second time.

IN COMMITTEE.

Bill passed through Committee without debate, reported without amendment, and the report adopted.

BILL—CONTRACTORS AND WORKMEN'S LIEN.

SECOND READING MOVED.

HON. J. M. DREW (Central): A few days ago I was approached by a member of another place and asked to introduce this measure in the Legislative Council. Before agreeing to do so I decided to go carefully through the Bill, and come to a conclusion as to whether it was a desirable Bill to introduce into this Chamber. After giving the matter careful attention, after investigating the Bill with a great deal of care, I came to the conclusion that it is one which may be profitably placed on the statute-book. The measure is modelled on the lines of an Act in force in New Zealand, where it has been in operation for twelve years, and as a result there has been no dissatisfaction—it has been successful in every respect. At the time it was introduced, there was considerable fear that it might not work satisfactorily; and it was presented to the Parliament of New Zealand on three occasions before it became law. The Bill served to remedy abuses which previously existed, with resulting good to the community. This measure is copied from a Bill drafted by Sir Samuel Griffith, then Premier of Queensland, now the Federal Chief Justice. It has already been once before this Chamber—I think about five or six years ago it was introduced by Mr. Speed and rejected. Still, I hope it will meet on this occasion not with rejection, but with the same success as in New Zealand when a similar measure passed on the third occasion. It was towards the close of a session when Mr. Speed introduced the Bill previously, and there was not then sufficient time for its consideration. I feel sure that on this occasion, with some days still before us, members will be able to give it such consideration as it deserves; and if they find it is not in the interests of Western Australia and of the general community, they can reject it. But I have sufficient confidence in this House to feel certain that members will treat the Bill with

every fair play. The object of the measure is to protect contractors, subcontractors, and workmen against dishonest—and what is equally as bad, financially unsound—employers, and I think there is a fair proportion of these in every community.

HON. J. W. WRIGHT: We have none here. I have had many years' experience, and have not known an instance.

HON. J. M. DREW: I am told, though I cannot cite special cases, that it occasionally occurs that unscrupulous employers let contracts for the erection of buildings, then getting behind in their progress payments they induce the contractor to give them breathing time, which they take advantage of by mortgaging the land; so that in the end they "slip up" the contractor for the money due to him. I do not say such cases are frequent, but they do occur, and thus they render necessary some legislation to safeguard the contractor and the subcontractor, and also the workmen.

HON. J. W. HACKETT: Is there any protection in the Bill for the employer?

HON. J. M. DREW: I do not know that any protection is necessary for the employer. If the work is not done he does not pay, and he pays only up to 75 per cent. of the value of the work done. If the hon. member will insert a clause in the Bill to protect the employer, I shall have no objection. Suppose a contractor cannot get his money from an employer such as I have referred to, what occurs? Unless the contractor is a man of means, he cannot pay wages or pay for material, so the injury extends far beyond the contractor. The Bill provides a safeguard against such practices. The main principles of the Bill are to be found in clauses 3 to 7 inclusive. Clause 3 provides that the contractor, subcontractor, or workman who does or procures to be done any work on any land or chattel is entitled to a lien. He has not a lien but is entitled to a lien. To enforce that lien he must take certain steps, on taking which he secures a lien on the whole interest of the employer in the land or chattel, for the amount of the contract. If that amount be £1,000, the contractor has a lien on the land or chattel to the extent of £1,000, if he gives proper notice, but subject to the limitation that the lien must not exceed the amount for

the time being due to the contractor under the contract.

HON. W. PATRICK: How could it be more than the amount due?

HON. J. M. DREW: You cannot object to having the fact definitely stated. By Subclause 2 the lien of the sub-contractor cannot exceed the amount due to him under the contract, and the lien of the workmen is not to exceed 30 days' earnings. The existing Workmen's Wages Act protects the workman to the extent of £10. This Bill goes a little farther; for if he is earning 10s. a day he is protected to the extent of £15, and if he is earning 15s., to the extent of £22 10s. I do not think anyone will cavil at the suggested increase. By Clause 4 the interests of the owner are adequately protected. The estate or interest of the owner who is not himself the employer, in the land or chattel in respect of which the work is to be done, shall be subject to the lien or liability as if he were himself the employer, but only to the extent to which such owner shall have consented in writing; otherwise, he is free from all liability. That is perfectly fair and unobjectionable.

HON. J. W. WRIGHT: Cannot a man secure a lien without the sanction of the owner?

HON. R. F. SKOLL: Look at the interpretation of "employer." It goes farther.

HON. J. M. DREW: No; I think it is very definite. Members may ask, where does the mortgagee come in if the property be mortgaged? He is fully protected. When the land to which a lien attaches is mortgaged under a mortgage duly registered, the mortgage shall, unless the mortgagee is a party to the contract, have priority over the lien; but if the mortgagee is a party to the contract the lien shall have priority. Again, if the mortgage is given after the contract is let, the mortgagee is not protected. Clause 5 gives a sub-contractor or a workman a charge over the moneys due to him upon any money payable to the contractor by the employer. But by Clause 9 they must give ample notice of their claims to the owner or the employer as the case may be. If they do not give this notice they are out of court. By Clause 7 the several liens and charges shall have priority in the order follow-

ing: first, the liens and charges of workmen for wages; secondly, the liens and charges of sub-contractors; and lastly, the liens of contractors.

HON. J. W. HACKETT: If a sub-contractor goes off with a sum of money handed to him for the payment of wages, is the employer bound to pay the workmen?

HON. J. M. DREW: I think so, if the contractor is so foolish as to pay the sub-contractor more than the value of the work done.

HON. J. W. HACKETT: Suppose the employer pays the sub-contractor on Saturday, and he goes off without paying the workmen?

HON. J. M. DREW: Then the employer is free from liability, as will be seen later on. By Clause 8 a person who intends to claim a lien on any land must, before the completion of the work, or within 14 days afterwards, give notice to the owner, if liable, specifying the amount; and if this notice is not given the lien shall not attach. That is perfectly fair, and it is thus with regard to the sub-contractor, and I think with regard to the workmen. They must give notice, or their claims will not stand. By Clause 11, which refers to the duties and obligations of the employer, upon receipt of notice of a claim it will be his duty to retain in his hands, until the time prescribed by the Bill for taking proceedings for enforcing the lien or charge, a sufficient part of the money payable by him under the contract to satisfy the claim. If he fails to retain this money he will be personally liable for the amount. I do not think there can be any possible objection to that. By Clause 12 the employer is protected. I think this clause refers to the point made by Dr. Hackett. All payments up to four-fifths of the contract price, made in good faith by the employer or owner to the contractor, or by the contractor to the sub-contractor, or by one sub-contractor to another sub-contractor, before notice in writing by the person claiming the lien or charge that he wishes to insist on his rights, shall operate as a discharge *pro tanto* with the lien or charge created by this Bill; but this clause shall not apply to any payment made for the purpose of defeating any claim made under the Bill. If such payments are made in good faith, the person making them is free to that

extent, and the claimant cannot succeed. But an additional paragraph to the clause provides that the employer must retain in his hands one-fifth part of the money payable until the expiration of 15 days after the completion of the work.

HON. J. W. HACKETT: To whom will that money go?

HON. J. M. DREW: It is retained so that any claims may be settled. It may go to the contractor, the sub-contractor, or the workmen. The employer can pay only four-fifths to the contractor, and must retain one-fifth for 15 days after the contract expires.

HON. J. W. WRIGHT: Then a man, by putting in a bogus claim, can tie up the money.

HON. J. M. DREW: If members think the time should be reduced, I have no objection; but I think some time after the completion of the work should be stipulated, and I do not think 15 days so long. Clause 13 protects the employer. Every contractor who sublets any part of the work to be done by him shall, immediately upon entering into any sub-contract, give a written notice to the employer that such sub-contract has been let, and must state the name of the sub-contractor, the work to be done by him, the amount of the sub-contract, and the mode of payment; and if he fails to do that, he is liable to a penalty not exceeding £25.

HON. J. W. WRIGHT: That is a labour move to do away with piece-work.

HON. J. M. DREW: This Bill has not been introduced by any member of the Parliamentary Labour party; and even if it had been, I do not think that act would weigh with this House, which is supposed to consider measures, and I think does consider them, on their merits only. The remaining clauses are mainly machinery clauses. If members agree with the main principles of the Bill, in clauses 3 to 7, it will be easy to pass the measure. I quite realise it is capable of amendment, and may perhaps be amended with a good result; but I sincerely hope it will not be rejected, and if members think it advisable to make amendments, these will probably be of distinct advantage to the measure. I move that the bill be now read a second time.

On motion by the HON. G. RANDELL, debate adjourned.

BILL—PERMANENT RESERVES REDEDICATION.

Received from the Legislative Assembly, and read a first time.

BILL—EXCESS (FIVE YEARS).

SECOND READING.

THE COLONIAL SECRETARY (Hon. J. D. Connolly): At first sight this Bill of which I now move the second reading looks rather a formidable measure to tackle so suddenly, as it were, having only come down a few days ago. But it is simply to make legal the expenditure that has been neglected to be legalised for the past five years. Members will notice on the Treasurer's Estimates every year there is a large amount—I think this year it is £150,000—called the Treasurer's Advance Account. Any sum that is not particularly set out as an item on the Estimates and on which expenditure is incurred by the Government has to be debited to this account. Afterwards it is placed to its particular division, whether in the Lands Department, the Treasury, the Works Department, or wherever it should go. Although the amount received parliamentary sanction by being passed in a lump sum as the Treasurer's Advance Account, the items should receive approval in the manner in which the money is expended. To comply with the Audit Act, it is necessary to pass this Bill to legalise these payments.

HON. J. W. HACKETT: Can the Colonial Secretary explain how so many years have elapsed without an Excess Bill?

THE COLONIAL SECRETARY: I am in no way responsible for past Governments, and I do not wish to cast reflections. Perhaps they had somewhat of a tired feeling and did not bring in the Bill annually.

HON. W. KINGSMILL: It only applies since 1904, when the present Audit Act was passed.

THE COLONIAL SECRETARY: If it only applied since 1904, why wish to legalise expenditure for 1901-2 and

1902-3? It is quite apparent that an Excess Bill should have been brought in for these two years. The Government of 1903-4 and 1904-5 neglected to do this. This is a Bill that should come down annually. Some reflection is cast on past Governments for not bringing down an Excess Bill. It is necessary to have the items particularised in the Excess Bill. This measure extends over five years, and I do not think members will require an explanation of every item. I am prepared to give an explanation in regard to every item during the last financial year while the present Government and the previous Government have been in office. I cannot give a clear explanation of items previous to that.

Question put and passed.

Bill read a second time.

IN COMMITTEE.

HON. G. RANDELL called attention to the state of the House.

Bells rung and quorum formed.

Bill passed through Committee without debate, reported without amendment, and the report adopted.

ADJOURNMENT.

The House adjourned at 8-55 o'clock, until the next day.

Legislative Assembly,

Thursday, 6th December, 1906.

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THE SPEAKER took the Chair at 3 o'clock p.m.

PRAYERS.

QUESTION—PRINTING IN PRISON.

MR. WARE asked the Treasurer: 1. Was the last report of the Fremantle Harbour Trust, as printed and presented to Parliament, printed at the Fremantle Prison? 2. Was this due to lack of capability on the part of the Government Printer and his staff? 3. If so, does the Minister intend to take steps to transfer the instructor from Fremantle Prison to the Government Printing Office, and place him in control?

THE TREASURER replied: 1, Yes; 2, No; 3, Answered by No. 2.

QUESTION—MAP SHELVES, HOW MADE.

MR. JOHNSON (for Mr. Bath) asked the Minister for Lands: 1, Is it a fact that the iron shelves used for maps in the Lands Department are imported from England? 2, Will the Minister ascertain if they can be made locally? 3, If they can be so manufactured, will the Minister give instructions for this to be done in the future?

THE MINISTER FOR LANDS replied: 1, Chubb's steel plan presses have been imported from England. 2, Inquiries were made by the Works Department prior to ordering, and it was reported that the same quality could not be manufactured locally. 3, Yes.

QUESTION—FEDERATION REFERENDUM BILL.

MR. H. BROWN asked the Premier: 1, Is it the intention of the Government to allow the Federation Referendum Bill